

Message Text

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MILAN 0258

E.O. 16652: GDS
TAGS: PINT, IT
SUBJECT: PSI PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES: NEW FACES, OLD DILEMMA

REF ROME 1746

1. SUMMARY. SOCIALISTS IN MILAN CONSULAR DISTRICT HAVE USED RECENT PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES TO BRING IN NEW FACES BY DROVES. RENEWED PSI EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES ARE YOUNG, FAVORABLE TO CRAXI LINE , ANTI-COMMUNIST-- AND ANTI-DC. THEY ARE ALSO BADLY DIVIDED ON WHAT TO DO NEXT. END SUMMARY.

2. PAST THREE MONTHS HAVE SEEN IMPRESSIVE RENEWAL HERE OF SOCIALIST PROVINCIAL EXECUTIVE COMMITTEES IN FIRST CONGRESSES SINCE BETTINO CRAXI WRESTED NATIONAL SECRETARYSHIP FROM FRANCESOC DI MARTINO LAST YEAR. CONGRESSES HELD IN ALL BUT FOUR OF CONSULAR DISTRICT'S FIFTEEN PROVINCES HAVE SEEN ASTONISHING TURNOVER IN PARTY DIRECTIVE POSITIONS, WITH SOCIALIST LEADERS IN MILAN ESTIMATING RENEWAL AT 60-70 PERCENT. IN BERGAMO, 24 OF 31 SEATS CHANGED HANDS; IN PAVIA, 23 OF 31; IN VERONA AND VARESE, 70 PERCENT,

3. NEW COMMITTEES ARE ALSO YOUNGER. IN VERONA, FOR
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EXAMPLE, NEWLY-ELECTED THIRTYISH-LOOKING PSI PROVINCIAL SECRETARY TOLD US HE WAS ONE OF OLDEST ON EXECUTIVE.

4. OUR PSI CONTACTS ATTRIBUTE ABNORMAL PERCENTAGE OF NEW PEOPLE TO STRONG FEELING IN PARTY THAT PAST WAYS WERE MISTAKEN. SOCIALIST RANK AND FILE SAID TO BE FED UP WITH CORRUPTION AND SUBSERVIENT TO DC. AND PSI LOCAL

LEADERS ARE IRRITATED BY PCI DOMINANCE OVER PARTY AND TIRED OF PRTY'S OWN INWARD-LOOKING APPROACH. JUNE 1976 ELECTORAL DEFEAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN TURNING POINT FOR SOCIALISTS HERE, JUST AS JUNE 1975 ELECTIONS WERE FOR DC.

5. WATCHWORD ASSOCIATED WITH CONGRESS CHANGES APPEARS TO BE AUTONOMY. YOUNGER SOCIALISTS ARE IN COMPLETE AGREEMENT WITH CRAXI THAT PSI MUST DISTINGUISH ITSELF FROM PCI, POSITION PARTICULARLY PRONOUNCED IN PROVINCES LIKE PIACENZA WHERE TWO PARTIES--GIUNTA PARTNERS SINCE 1975--GETTING ALONG POORLY.

6. MAJORITY OF NEWLY-SELECTED PROVINCIAL COMMITTEEMEN ARE EVEN MORE POORLY DISPOSED TO DC, WHOM THEY BLAME FOR LARGE PART OF PSI'S LOW FORTUNES AND WITH WHOM THEY HAVE NO INTENTION OF COLLABORATING AT LEAST IN NEAR TERM. ONLY NEW COMMITTEES WE CAN IDENTIFY WHICH CONTAIN POCKETS OF PEOPLE FAVORABLE TO RETURN TO DC ARE BRESCIA (30 PERCENT OF NEW DIRECTIVE), CREMONA (20 PERCENT), AND BERGAMO (ABOUT 10).

7. CRAXI SECRETARYSHIP APPEARS TO ENJOY APPROVAL OF PRACTICALLY ALL SOCIALISTS HERE, THOUGH THERE IS NO SEPARATE CRAXI FACTION COMPARABLE TO THAT OF DE MARTINO. SUPPORT IS FOR CRAXI LINE RATHER THAN CRAXI PERSONALLY.

IT HANGS ON HIS YOUTH, HIS CLEARER IMAGE, HIS INSISTENCE ON PSI INDEPENDENCE, AND HIS OPENNESS TO LINKS WITH SOCIALIST PARTIES ELSEWHERE.

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8. NOT THAT ALL FACTIONS (CORRENTI) HAVE DISAPPEARED. DEVOTEES OF MANCA (BRESCIA), SIGNORILE (BRESCIA, BERGAMO), LOMARDI (BERGAMO, TRENTO), BERTOLDI (VERONA), AND MANCINI AND DE MARTINO (SEE ABOVE) ARE IN EVIDENCE EVEN THOUGH PARTY HAS BANNED ORGANIZED FACTIONS OFFICIALLY.

9. RECENT MANCINI-DE MARTINO INITIATIVE ON TAKING NEW LOOK AT POSSIBILITY OF RETURNING TO GOVERNMENT WITH DC HAD PRACTICALLY NO SUPPORT AMONG NEWLY-ELECTED SOCIALISTS. THEY WERE PRONE TO CONDEMN SUBSTANCE OF PROPOSAL AND, EVEN MORE SO, WHAT THEY SAW AS DISRUPTIVE NATURE OF INTERVENTION IN PARTY AFFAIRS BY TWO HAS-BEENS. IN CREMONA, FOR EXAMPLE, WHERE 20 PERCENT OF CONGRESS DELEGATES FAVORED MANCINI-DE MARTINO PROPOSAL, THEY NONETHELESS CONDEMNED WAY IT WAS BROUGHT FORWARD. AND IN VARESE, HOME OF DEPUTY MICHELE ZUCCALA WHO ORGANIZED MEETING BETWEEN TWO PSI EX-SECRETARIES IN NAPLES, ZUCCALA IS SAID

NOW TO BE COMPLETELY ISOLATED BY PRO-CRAXI FORCES.

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10. ALTHOUGH FAIRLY UNITED ON WHAT THEY DON'T WANT, NEW SOCIALIST SOCIALIST DIRECTIVE COMMITTEES SEEM STILL DIVIDED ON WHAT TO DO NEXT--THOUGH TREND, ACCORDING TO PSI LOMBARDY SECRETARY GABRIELE BACCALINI, IS TO LEFT. NEW COMMITTEES, HE EXPLAINED, MORE PRONE THAN PREDECESSORS TO WANT TO ATTACK PCI FOR OVERLY-MODERATE POSITIONS, PARTICULARLY IN UNION MATTERS. WE NOTE THAT THIS WAS TENDENCY OF NEW PSI VERONA SECRETARY. ON OTHER HAND, NEW VARESE SECRETARY, AS WELL AS LOMBARDY SECRETARY BACCALINI, FAVORED UNIONS' TONING DOWN THEIR CLAIMS. THUS THERE APPEARS TO BE BROAD SPLIT ON QUESTION OF WHAT SLICE OF ELECTORATE PSI SHOULD BE AIMING FOR. AS BACCALINI PUT IT, PARTY MUST NOT TRY TO TAKE POSITIONS BOTH TO LEFT AND RIGHT OF COMMUNISTS AT SAME TIME, PHENOMENON WHICH IS OCCURRING BECAUSE OF LACK OF AGREEMENT ON WHAT POLICIES ARE GOOD FOR COUNTRY, WHO PSI ELECTORATE OUGHT TO BE, HOW BEST TO APPEAL TO THAT ELECTORATE, AND ABSENCE OF LEADERSHIP ON MATTER FROM CRAXI. VERONA PSI SECRETARY SAID HIS ONLY GRIPE AGAINST PRESENT NATIONAL SECRETARY WAS CRAXI'S FAILURE SO FAR TO TELL PARTY CLEARLY WHERE IT IS GOING.

11. MOST IMPORTANT PSI PROVINCIAL CONGRESS OF ALL, MILAN'S, HAS NOT YET TAKEN PLACE, THOUGH NEW PROVINCIAL SECRETARY
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GIUSEPPE ABBONDANZA WAS ELECTED LAST NOVEMBER. MILAN SOCIALISTS OVERWHELMINGLY PRO-CRAXI, WITH HEAVY-WEIGHTS LIKE MILAN MAYOR TOGNOLI, LOMBARDY REGIONAL VICE PRESIDENT GANGI, AND MILAN PROVINCIAL SECRETARY ABBONDANZA AMONG CRAXI'S MOST IMPORTANT SUPPORTERS. ON PROBLEM OF RELATIONSHIP WITH COMMUNISTS, HOWEVER, MILAN CONGRESS MAY SEE DIFFERENCES SURFACE. ONE FAIRLY INFLUENTIAL PSI GROUP LED BY PROVINCIAL VICE SECRETARY RICOTTI WOULD LIKE TO SEE BROAD-BASED LEFTIST-LED GOVERNMENT IN ROME, WITH PSI ROLE TO KEEP COMMUNISTS HONEST (MILAN 0142). MILAN AUTONOMISTS, HOWEVER, LIKE GANGI, NOT ONLY OPPOSE THAT IDEA BUT ARE PRIVATELY AGAINST PARTY'S OFFER FOR EMERGENCY GOVERNMENT AS WELL. THEY SEE NO ADVANTAGE FOR SOCIALISTS IN ANY GOVERNING COMBINATION WITH COMMUNISTS. (BUT NEITHER DO THEY ESPOUSE RETURN TO DC, AT LAST NOT YET.)

12. ALTHOUGH SOCIALISTS ARE TRYING TO SHED HANG-DOG IMAGE AND HAVE IN FACT EFFECTED THOROUGH PERSONNEL RE-NEWAL HERE, THEY ARE LESS THAN CONFIDENT ABOUT

SHORT-TERM PROSPECTS FOR PARTY. NO SOCIALIST, FOR EXAMPLE, FEELS ELECTIONS NOW WOULD BENEFIT PSI. ALL REALIZE THEY HAVE LONG WAY TO GO AND THAT CRAXI NEEDS TIME TO STRENGTHEN PARTY. AND FEW CLAIM TO HAVE ANSWER TO IDEOLOGICAL PROBLEM OF HOW TO COMPETE WITH COMMUNIST PARTY WHICH EVERY DAY APPEARS MORE SOCIALDEMOCRATIC.

13. AT SAME TIME, OUR PSI CONTACTS CLAIM PARTY HAS TURNED CORNER AND IS ON ROAD BACK TO HEALTH. THEY ARE RELIEVED THAT DE MARTINO IS GONE. THEY SAY SOCIALISTS HAVE ROLE IN FWQCB JR THEY ARE HOPEFUL THEY CAN ONCE AGAIN FILL THAT ROLE WELL. BUT ATTITUDE IS RATHER ONE OF HOPE THAN CONFIDENCE.
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14. IN SUM, CONSULAR DISTRICT SOCIALISTS UNDERGOING THOROUGH OVERHAUL WITHOUT, HOWEVER, HAVING GENERATED VERY CLEAR COLLECTIVE IDEAS ON WHERE TO GO FROM HERE. WHAT IS ADJUDGED BAD EXPERIENCE WITH DC HAS PRODUCED REACTION IN PARTY THAT WAS ONE REASON FOR ELECTION OF NEW, YOUNGER PEOPLE TO PROVINCIAL DIRECTIVE COMMITTEES. AT SAME TIME, JUNE 1976 ELECTION RESULTS SHOWED SOCIALISTS THAT FRATER-NIZATION WITH PCI HAD ONLY HASTENED THEIR DECLINE. NEW GROUP OF PSI OFFICIALS HAS BOTH LESSONS FIRMLY IN MIND.

THEY ARE SPLIT, THOUGH, ON WHETHER TO CONTINUE TO COURT ELECTORATE THAT FINDS DC TOO CONSERVATIVE AND PCI TOO RADICAL, OR TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF PCI'S NEW-FOUND MODERNATION TO TRY TO OUTFLANK COMMUNISTS ON LEFT. PROVINCIAL CONGRESSES APPEAR TO HAVE MARKED INCREASED TENDENCY TWARD LATTER STRATEGY, THOUGH RELATIVE WEIGHTS OF THESE VIEW-POINTS STILL UNCLEAR. WHAT IS CLEAR IS THAT THEY REPRESENT SPLIT ON FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE THAT SOCIALISTS MUST RESOLVE AMONG THEMSELVES.

15. ON PLUS SIDE, CONGRESSES HAVE ANSWERED ANY DOUBTS ABOUT BROADNESS OF CRAXI'S STANDING IN CRAXI'S FAVOR AND HAVE SHOWN SUPPORT FOR MANCINI-DE MARTINO PRETENTIONS TO BE SLIM INDEED. CONGRESSES ALSO EFFECTED FAIRLY CLEAN SWEEP OF LOCAL OFFICIALS ASSOCIATED WITH PAST, UNSUCCESSFUL POLICIES AND THEIR REPLACEMENT WITH YOUNGER PEOPLE. SO TIME MAY WELL BE ON SIDE OF SOCIALISTS HERE. BUT CAN THEY WAIT THAT LONG? FINA

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